



Abercorn School Complaints Policy for Parents

Abercorn School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, it will be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Abercorn School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and Abercorn School will ensure that **parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.**

In accordance with paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Abercorn School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done, or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalized for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Timeframe for dealing with complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the

school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Complaints involving EYFS

All written complaints relating to the requirements under the statutory framework for the EYFS will be promptly investigated and complainants notified of the outcome of the investigation within **28 days** of receipt of the complaint.

Abercorn School will provide Ofsted on request with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of such complaints will be kept for at least 3 years.

Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 08456 014772.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution:

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**.
- If parents have a complaint, they should contact their son/daughter's form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head or Deputy Head as appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of the Pre-Prep/Head of the Preparatory School or the High Mistress will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the 'line manager' concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event the 'line manager' will attempt to resolve the matter in five working days or as soon as is practicable. If the complaint is against the Head or High Mistress, then parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

- Should a matter not be resolved within five working days, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents **fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.**

Stage 2: Formal Resolution:

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents will be asked to **put their complaint in writing** to the Head or the High Mistress, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take.
- In most cases, the Head or the High Mistress will speak to the parents concerned within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head or the High Mistress to carry out further investigations. These will be completed in a further 5 working days or as soon as is practicable.
- The Head or the High Mistress will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head or the High Mistress is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head or the High Mistress will give reasons for the decision.
- The written decision will be issued within fourteen working days of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Head or the High Mistress will write to the parents within the fourteen working day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why she is unable to issue her decision and informing the parents when she will do so, which will be within twenty eight working days of receipt of the complaint in any event. If the complaint is against the Head or the High Mistress, the Chairman of the Board of Directors will call for a full report from the Head or High Mistress and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or met with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.
- **If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.**

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to involve Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the Head or High Mistress informing him/her of their decision to do so within 28 working days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a named director. The named director will then take responsibility for the organisation of a complaints panel hearing.

- The panel will consist of **three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and at least one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.**
- Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the board of directors.
- The named director, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally **within fourteen working days.**
- If the named director and/or the members of the panel deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days before the hearing. Any such further particulars not received within five working days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it will not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.
- **The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish.** This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within fourteen working days of the first hearing wherever possible but within twenty-eight working days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to or email the parents informing them of their decision together with their reasons. **The decision of the panel will be final.**
- The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the High Mistress, directors and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual.
- Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6 (2) j of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Footnotes to Complaints Procedure:

1. In the event that a complaint involves or relates to a teacher, then the teacher will be kept fully informed in writing of the procedure being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation.
2. In the event of a panel hearing, the teacher will have the right to make representations to the panel.

3. The director with responsibility for Child Protection procedures, will, as a matter of course, produce an annual report on the school's effectiveness and compliance with child protection issues and such issues will be an item on the agenda of all formal directors' meetings.

Signed: Senior Leadership Team

Date: November 2011